

Transcript - Ministers Blair, Mendicino, Lametti, Ng, Jaczek, Leblanc, Fortier hold a news conference to provide an update regarding the situation in Ottawa - February 17, 2022

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DATE/DATE:

February 19, 2022 11:00 a.m. (EST)

LOCATION/ENDROIT:

Teleconference, OTTAWA, ON

PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX:

Hon. Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety; Hon. Helena Jaczek, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario);

Hon. Mona Fortier, President of the Treasury Board;

Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development;

Yasir Naqvi, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness;

Hon. Bill Blair, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness;

Hon. David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada;

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities;

SUBJECT/SUJET:

Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) Helena Jaczek, President of the Treasury Board Mona Fortier, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development Mary Ng, and Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness Yasir Naqvi, joined by President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada David Lametti, and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities Dominic LeBlanc, hold a news conference to provide an update regarding the situation in Ottawa.

Moderator: (In progress) Ottawa is being held remotely on Saturday, February 19th. I'm the moderator, Greg Quinn, with Market News International. With us today, we have Marco, Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety, Helena Jaczek, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Yasir Naqvi, Member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre and Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Bill Blair, Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

Et encore avec nous aujourd'hui, l'honorable Mona Fortier, présidente du Conseil du trésor, David Lametti, ministre de la Justice et Procureur général du Canada, et l'honorable Dominic LeBlanc, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales.

For those who've dialed in, I remind everyone to stick to best practices to minimize outside noise.

Et pour poser une question, appuyez sur le bouton *Raise Hand*.

Secondly, feel free to identify yourself and your media outlet when asking a question and a follow-up. Donc, une question, une supplémentaire.

I understand we have an hour for opening statements and questions today. That housekeeping done, let's begin with the opening remarks. Ministers, bienvenue. À vous la parole.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Merci beaucoup. Bonjour tout le monde.

I'm pleased to be joining you virtually from the traditional indigenous territories of the Algonquin people, and to be joined by a number of colleagues who will also be providing updates within their respective portfolios.

Yesterday, we saw big strides taken towards restoring public order in Ottawa as a result of the massive joint operation led by the Integrated Central Command, which is made up of the Ottawa Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. So far, police have made over 100 arrests, removed many vehicles and have cleared the areas around Rideau and Sussex. In fact, many of the blockades in the downtown core have either left or have been removed.

Today, more progress is being made. Police are making their way through the streets methodically and responsibly. This is encouraging, but the work is not yet done.

I want to express my gratitude to all of the members of the RCMP, the OPP, the Ottawa Police Service and officers from right across the country who have been working tirelessly and around the clock to restore order in Ottawa. They have been carrying out their responsibilities in a professional, proportional and in a measured manner.

L'opération policière qui a commencé jeudi soir et s'est poursuivie tout au long de la journée d'hier se poursuit. Je tiens à féliciter tous les membres des forces de l'ordre pour leur approche tactique, leurs mesures et leur professionnalisme. Je tiens à rappeler une fois de plus à toutes personnes qui envisagent d'entrer ou de rester dans cette zone, partez maintenant. Je tiens également à rappeler à chacun d'éviter de publier les détails des opérations ou des mouvements de la police sur les médias sociaux.

Yesterday, the Ottawa Police Service Interim Chief Bell, along with members from the RCMP and OPP held a joint press conference. And during that press conference, Interim Chief Bell noted the significant action that police have taken over the last number of days have been possible thanks to new authorities granted to the police under the Emergencies Act. To quote the chief, "Without these authorities, we wouldn't be able to do the work we are doing today." This is why our government took the careful and deliberate decision to invoke the Emergencies Act.

We've given additional tools to law enforcement to ensure that we can restore public order in Ottawa, to keep open our borders for trade and for economic security and to ensure that we are upholding public safety across the country. The very carefully tailored measures which have been included as part of the declaration under the Emergencies Act are targeted, they're time limited and they are Charter guaranteed.

Enfin, je veux partager quelques détails sur notre progrès dans la lutte contre le financement de ces blocages illégaux. Lors de la réunion d'hier du Groupe d'intervention en cas d'incidents, nous avons été informés des progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre des mesures financières prévues sous la loi sur les situations d'urgence. Jusqu'à présent, les fournisseurs de services financiers ont gelé au moins 76 représentant environ \$3.2 millions.

This is another example on how the concrete and targeted measures under the Emergencies Act are being put into effect. We have been able to freeze at least 76 accounts, representing \$3.2 million that were attributable to illegal blockades. Additionally, FINTRAC's pre-registration process is ongoing and it is working with small and medium size banks to implement the Emergency Act's orders. As we have said all along, we have taken the decision very carefully, very thoughtfully and as a measure of last resort to invoke the Emergencies Act. It is time limited, it is targeted and it requires compliance with the Charter to ensure that we are protecting the individual freedoms and principles and values that are guaranteed under the Charter while at the same time enabling law enforcement to do the job on the streets, in our neighbourhoods, at our borders to uphold public safety. We will only use the

Emergencies Act for as long as is necessary, and that is something that we continue to be focused on every day.

Thank you very much. Merci. And I will now pass it back to the moderator.

Moderator: Okay, thank you for those statements. We will now turn to questions. The first one I see is David Akin, Global News. David, over to you.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Sorry, there was maybe other statements to be said before, moderator, if you would let us.

Moderator: Yes, I'm sorry. Go ahead. Thank you.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Helena, I think you're next.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I believe I am. Good morning everyone. Bonjour à tous. I would like to acknowledge that I'm joining you virtually from Holland Landing and I am here today on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek of the Williams Treaty First Nations, Huron-Wendat and Métis Nation peoples.

For the past three weeks, the city of Ottawa has been devastated by illegal blockades.

Depuis près de trois semaines (sic) les gens du centre-ville d'Ottawa subissent les conséquences des blocus illégaux qui s'y déroulent.

I've seen firsthand the effects these illegal blockades have had on Ottawa residents and their businesses. Businesses have been forced to drastically reduce their hours and in many cases, they have had to close their doors entirely because they have been harassed and intimidated. Throughout the city, residents who have steadfastly supported those businesses throughout the pandemic no longer feel safe to go out on the streets of their city to visit those great local businesses that help define Ottawa's vibrant neighbourhoods.

This has taken a tremendous economic and social toll on the people and entrepreneurs in Ottawa. It has occasioned tremendous inconvenience and stress and cost millions of dollars in lost revenue.

These businesses play a vital role in the vitality and economic prosperity of our nation's capital.

À Ottawa, les entreprises situées au centre-ville jouent un rôle important dans la vitalité et les prospérité économique de notre ville.

As the Prime Minister has said many times, these recent challenges have been unprecedented but our government will be there as we build towards recovery, not only from this illegal blockade but from the pandemic. That's why today, I'm proud to announce that the Government of Canada, through FedDev Ontario, is investing up to \$20 million to support Ottawa downtown businesses impacted by the illegal blockades.

Je suis heureuse d'annoncer que le gouvernement du Canada, par l'intermédiaire de FedDev Ontario, investit jusqu'à \$20 millions dans l'Investir Ottawa pour soutenir les entreprises du centre-ville d'Ottawa touchées par les blocus illégaux.

Small businesses in Ottawa will be eligible to receive non-repayable contributions of up to \$10,000.

More details on eligibility and the applications process will be available soon. This funding will be delivered by Invest Ottawa, which has a strong track record of supporting the business community in Ottawa, having delivered targeted programming and services to businesses for over a decade. Invest Ottawa is collaborating with key partners in the region on this initiative, including the Ottawa Board of Trade and the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas. We are aware that other areas of Ontario have faced similar struggles and we are looking into this. Our government will continue to work hard to ensure our businesses, communities and all Canadians have the support they need for a strong and resilient economic recovery.

Thank you. Merci. And I think now I'm turning over to the Honourable Mary Ng.

Hon. Mary Ng: Thank you, merci Minister Jaczek. It's really great to be here with you and colleagues, as well as to Minister Fortier and to Parliamentary Secretary Naqvi and to all of the Ottawa area Members of Parliament, who have been incredible advocates for their constituents throughout this challenging time.

As workers, small businesses and people across the country have struggled through this pandemic, these past three weeks have even been more difficult for businesses at the heart of our nation's capital, whether it's Elgin, Bank, Sparks or the market, I've heard from entrepreneurs and small businesses across Ottawa. And just when those very businesses across our province have been opening their doors again, businesses here have had to close theirs for the safety of their staff and that of their customers and that has been unacceptable.

C'est inacceptable que des petites entreprises aient eu à fermer en raison de ces barrages illégaux.

This \$20 million in support from our government will bring much needed relief to heavily impacted Ottawa businesses and I want to thank Invest Ottawa for their ongoing collaboration with FedDev to deliver this important support. Today's announcement is just one more step that our government is taking to support small businesses. Since the start of this pandemic, we've invested in crucial supports, including the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy, the hardest hit business recovery program and recently extended lockdown supports. Businesses have relied on these programs and will continue to have to count on them so that we can bridge them to recovery.

As the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and my ministerial colleagues have said, no one has the right to illegally occupy our cities, disturb our communities and to cause serious harm by shutting down small businesses and preventing hardworking Canadians from being able to work. We will continue to have your backs through this pandemic, just as we have done and we will drive towards a strong, inclusive and sustainable economic recovery. And to the Canadians who are listening to this, when these businesses reopen, please support our local businesses in Ottawa. I know I will.

Thank you so very much.

Merci tout le monde.

And over to you, Minister Fortier.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Thank you Mary. Bonjour. Merci pour votre présence. Good morning and thank you all for joining us today.

Vous savez, les dernières semaines ont été particulièrement difficiles pour nos entreprises locales, nos organismes communautaires, nos travailleurs et nos familles. Les résidents d'Ottawa et de toute la région de la capitale nationale ont subi et continuent de subir une situation qui est inacceptable. Nos petites entreprises ont fait preuve d'une incroyable résilience tout au long de cette pandémie. Nos services essentiels ont été aux premières lignes de cette pandémie et nous ont aidés à maintenir la sécurité des résidents.

We know that in the past weeks, many businesses have been forced to close their doors and have been subjected to intimidation, harassment, violence and hatred. This situation has caused major disruptions of access, it has impacted staffing, delivery of goods and generated significant loss of revenue. This is unacceptable. We are here to let you know we stand with you and we will continue to have your back. Today's announcement demonstrates our government's commitment to making sure our downtown Ottawa businesses have the relief funds they need to recover.

In the past weeks, I've had numerous conversations with Mayor Watson. I've also spoken and listened at length with city councillors, representatives of local BIAs, Oakville DIA, the Ottawa Business Trade, *le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la capitale nationale*, Invest Ottawa and business and community leaders. I have been actively engaged with concerned business owners, residents and organizations through countless phone calls, emails and text messages. They have shared firsthand with me the disruptions to their livelihood and wellbeing.

Et je sais également que de nombreux travailleurs ont été touchés car ils n'ont pas pu quitter leurs domiciles en raison des barrages routiers et de l'insécurité, ou que leurs employeurs ont dû fermer leurs portes. Les employés admissibles peuvent appliquer à l'Assurance-emploi et nous continuons d'explorer les options pour offrir des soutiens additionnels. Cette annonce aujourd'hui est possible grâce au travail acharné de mes collègues ici présents mais aussi grâce au dévouement de mes collègues de la région de la capitale nationale qui, depuis le tout début, se trouvent au premier rang de l'immense pression et des difficultés engendrées par cette situation. Ils ont été à l'écoute, ont partagé les préoccupations des résidents, des travailleurs et des entreprises dans leurs communautés et ont su défendre leurs intérêts féroce.

Merci pour votre travail, et nous allons continuer à s'assurer que nos entreprises puissent reprendre rapidement. Merci.

Je passe la parole à mon collègue d'Ottawa-Centre, Yasir Naqvi.

Yasir Naqvi: Merci beaucoup la ministre. Thank you very much.

For the past 22 days, members of my community have been held hostage by an unlawful occupation. Les membres de la communauté qui vivent et travaillent dans le centre-ville souffrent.

They have been harassed, subjected to hurtful and racist symbols and there has been reports of assaults. For weeks, many businesses downtown have had to close their doors to ensure staff safety and security of their shops, whether that is Mushu Ice Cream on Bank Street, Aiana Restaurant on

O'Connor or Yimin Dim Sum on Kent Street, they and others have all had an incredibly rough time. The list goes on and on.

Throughout the pandemic, the federal government has been there for small businesses and workers. Now is no different. I'm pleased that today's funding announcement will help businesses in Ottawa's downtown core recover from the impacts of these protests so that they can continue serving our community. Thank you to Invest Ottawa for helping us quickly distribute the support to those in need. We know how valuable Invest Ottawa has been for our region and for so many businesses who have been impacted by the pandemic and will now be there to support businesses who have been impacted by these unlawful protests.

I would also like to address the workers who have been impacted by these protests. Please do know that we are seeking further measures that can provide relief for you. At this time, the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit, CWLB, which gives temporary income support to employed and self-employed people who cannot work due to COVID-19 lockdown continues to be available. My colleagues and I are working closely together to seek further measures that will provide support during this difficult time. And finally, to the residents of Centertown, I know this has been an unimaginably difficult time. Know we will get through this together and better days are to come.

Thank you everyone for joining.

Merci à tous.

Media availability will now follow. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Ministers. Merci. Again, if you have a question on the call, please use the Raise Hand button to indicate your interest. I will turn to the first question, David Akin, Global News. Question: Thank you very much, Greg, and thank you Ministers. I don't have a statement, just questions. And the first one, I guess, probably for Minister Mendicino or Minister Lametti, but I guess Minister Mendicino, I think you mentioned that this Emergencies Act will remain in place as long as it needs to, and I'm watching what seems to be a very successful police operation, we hope, wrap up right now here in Ottawa. What are you looking for as the Public Safety Minister to say right, that's it. We don't need the special powers anymore in place? What are some of the things that Canadians can say ah, I see, this can be lifted? And to be honest, could it be lifted by the end of the weekend?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, I think it's an important question. And as I've said a number of times, David, that the situation is very fluid. So I agree with you on the surface, there does appear to be good progress that is being made on the streets in Ottawa and I do want to take a moment to express our profound gratitude to the members of law enforcement who've been carrying out this work under extraordinarily difficult conditions. It's not just the, it's not just all of the uncertainty that the illegal blockades and those who are dug in present, but yesterday, the weather took a turn for the worse and certainly, we're watching all of the, all of those variables play out in real time and we're all on pins and needles for the safety of those who are on the streets, principally the, the residents who, as you heard from MP Naqvi and Minister Fortier, have been under siege now for, for far too long.

We're concerned for the safety of those law enforcement individuals who are carrying out their responsibilities with great professionalism and under incredible stress. And we're also concerned for the safety of those individuals who have become intermingled with the illegal blockades. Thus far, I think we're all relieved that there has been a very minimum amount of confrontation and violence and we certainly hope that that will continue to be the case going forward. And the best way for that to happen is that those who are still here go home, as we have said time and time again.

And as for the Emergencies Act, there are many safeguards that are built into the Act to, to assure that we only use it for as long as is necessary. And, and so when it comes to making that determination as to when the conditions are no longer present such that the Emergencies Act are required, the declaration and the orders are required, first and foremost, I want to make sure that we take the advice of law enforcement. We're in routine touch with the Commissioner of the RCMP and with other members of law enforcement. We'll let them assess operationally since it is their domain of expertise whether or not they think the situation is in hand. So yes, there has been progress, but the situation remains dynamic, it remains fluid and we'll wait to see how things unfold in the coming hours and days.

Question: Thanks. And a follow-up probably for you as well, Minister Mendicino. We know that there were some arrested in Coutts who were associated with some extremist far-right groups such as Diagonol, some groups that, that are known presumably to authorities, national and security

authorities, etc., that they may advocate violence. We also know – I think you've said this earlier in the week – that there may be some elements in the protest here in Ottawa associated with those groups. So I'm wondering with the 100 or so arrested now, do you have anything more you can tell us about the presence in Ottawa of any elements, any individuals who might be associated with some of these groups that did some represent some, some violent threats? Is there anything you can share on that front?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, just what you see in the public domain and on social media, and those reports are, are very public around the movements of some individuals from one blockage to the other. But as to the charges, which stem from the illegal blockade in Coutts, which include, among other things, the conspiracy to commit murder, those are now before the courts, David. It would be inappropriate for any member of the government to comment further on it. Obviously as those charges play out in court and will be assigned to a prosecutor, there will be more details shared about exactly what particulars, you know, underlie the situation there. But, but I will say that as a government, we are looking at the big picture, we are looking at the timing, the tactics, the targets of the illegal blockades and I just want to assure you and everyone that both the law enforcement and our national security apparatus are watching the situation very, very carefully.

Moderator: Thank you. Merci. Prochaine question, Mylène Crête, La Presse.

Question: Bonjour. Pour revenir un peu sur la question de mon collègue David, je me demandais en ce qui a trait à la loi sur les mesures d'urgence, vous avez dit que vous allez consulter là les policiers pour savoir s'ils estiment que ce sera toujours nécessaire, mais quels critères exactement est-ce que vous allez tenir en compte parce qu'hier, vous parliez de prévention, alors ma compréhension c'est que la loi peut pas être utilisé à titre préventif?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Oui, vous avez raison. Il y a un élément de prévention là parce que la situation restait fluide, restait dynamique sur le terrain, pas seulement en Ottawa mais même à les frontières (sic) où le, le jour avant-hier, il y a un effort, une opération de les blocades illégales (sic) de résumer, recommencer la blockade (sic) à le Pont Ambassador. C'est une inquiétude qui, qui est partagée par la communauté à Windsor, même par les forces policières et même le gouvernement. Donc, ça c'est une de les raisons (sic) que les outils dans les déclarations, dans les ordres de la loi des mesures d'urgence restaient nécessaires. Et peut-être pour quelques autres perspectives, je vais passer la parole maintenant à le ministre Lametti.

Hon. David Lametti: Merci Marco. Merci Mylène. Ce qu'il faut comprendre, c'est que là, la loi sur les mesures d'urgence a été déclarée pour une situation évolutive, (sic) et ça, le fait que les, les convois pouvaient se déplacer facilement d'une place à l'autre et qu'il y avait des communications entre les, les différents, les différents endroits, c'est une situation donc qu'il faut suivre, qu'il faut continuer à suivre. Donc, oui, il y a un côté préventif, mais ça fait partie de la même situation pour laquelle on a invoqué la loi sur les mesures d'urgence. Donc, nous sommes en train de surveiller ce qui se passe, comme le ministre Mendicino vient de le dire.

Il y avait l'autre jour une situation à Windsor où la police, la police de la place a empêché un autre blocage et on continue à suivre évidemment les forces policières à travers le pays, continue de suivre les, les mouvements et puis une fois que la sécurité publique est assurée, on va, on va révoquer la loi, les mesures. On veut pas les avoir une journée de plus, mais faut que là, le pays soit sécurisé avant.

Question: D'accord. En ce qui a trait aux comptes bancaires qui ont été gelés, est-ce que il y a un lien à faire entre les gens qui ont été arrêtés à Ottawa, une centaine de personnes et les 76 comptes qui ont été gelés. Donc, est-ce que ce sont les comptes de personnes qui ont été arrêtées par la police hier?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Ça c'est les cibles aujourd'hui et c'était des actions qui étaient prendre (sic) par les forces policières dans une façon indépendante de le gouvernement. Il faut souligner ça et ça c'est les manières que la loi fonctionne. Sur le côté du gouvernement, nous créons les, les politiques, nous créons les lois mais c'est pour les services policières (sic) pour prendre l'action pour implémenter toutes les mesures dans la loi. Et peut-être je vais passer à le ministre Lametti pour des autres perspectives sur le fonctionnement de la loi.

Hon. David Lametti: Ce que j'aimerais ajouter, c'est que chaque, chaque côté est assujéti à la Charte, donc on va continuer à les appliquer d'une façon équilibrée et raisonnable. Je vais pas parler des, des opérations financières ou policières. Ce n'est pas, c'est une situation qui continue et donc, ce n'est pas, ce n'est pas à une personne élue de donner d'autres commentaires là-dessus.

Moderator: Thank you. Next question (inaudible) CBC.

Question: Hi, thanks. Mr. Mendicino, this is probably for you. You mentioned the amount of accounts that have been frozen and the number of, and the amount of money involved in that. Can you clarify for us what happens to the money in the accounts when they're frozen, and what may happen following the end of the emergency?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, the operationalization of the measures under the Emergencies Act is something that is being undertaken by police in conjunction with financial institutional partners, including the banks. So that is being done on, on an independent manner on the operational side and it would be inappropriate for us to comment further due to operational sensitivity and to preserve the integrity of what is going on right now, which is a very sophisticated, highly coordinated operation that is being carried out by enforcement in real time. But I would stress that the numbers that we have been able to provide to you thus far, again, with the cooperation and the advice of law enforcement, shows very obviously how the Emergencies Act is being used to bring about the conclusion and the peaceful conclusion of the illegal blockades.

This is one of the measures which does not require to be operationalized on the streets where there's the prospect of confrontation or physical violence, but rather by using powerful financial disincentives to encourage those to, to leave and to leave as quickly as possible and to not support the illegal blockades. I'd also point out that yesterday, Interim Chief Bell, who is the current police chief of the Ottawa Police Service stressed that they would not be able to be carrying out the operations that are playing out right now in the streets of Ottawa but for the invocation of the Emergencies Act. Now, this is a non-partisan professional police officer with many years of experience on the frontlines who understands what existing authorities there were prior to the Emergencies Act being introduced, who has said in no uncertain terms that this is an important and an essential tool.

And while we're seeing progress, it is important to recognize that the operation is not yet concluded. And so I think here, we have an example of someone with great experience and perspective understanding and recognizing that up until the introduction of the Emergencies Act, that there were many challenges that had been presented to police and to law enforcement in, in bringing about the end of the illegal blockades. And not only here in Ottawa, but right across the country. And I want to assure you and everyone that is watching that this is a tool that is being used effectively to bring about the conclusion of the illegal blockades peacefully, expeditiously but within the parameters of the Charter.

Question: For a follow-up, while the police operation's happening in downtown Ottawa, MPs just really metres away are debating the Emergencies Act in the House of Commons. Can maybe Mr. Mendicino again, can you describe any steps that might have been taken to, you know, secure the House of Commons while this is all going on?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Security on the Hill is governed by the Sergeant at Arms and the PPS, who has the jurisdictional responsibility to ensure security on the Hill, but I, I want to emphasize that there have been open lines of communication between the PPS, the Sergeant at Arms as well as the RCMP and members of the Integrated Central Command. We're very concerned for the safety of MPs and staff and all parliamentarians who are working on the Hill. In fact, as you saw, many of the blockades were concentrated on Wellington Street at Rideau and Sussex. And, you know, it is quite impressive that thus far, the enforcement operation has been carried out without there being any significant casualties or violence thus far.

I think that that is a real tribute to the police services and the first responders who have shown up who, despite the challenging circumstances, are, are doing a very effective job, showing restraint and patience and showing, I think, a very level headed approach. And for tho-, and what that has done is it enabled us to allow Parliament to sit, because it is important that parliamentarians have an opportunity to debate the Emergencies Act. This is the first time it has been invoked. We do need to be transparent with Canadians.

From the government's point of view, the measures that we have introduced are very targeted, they're very circumscribed to the circumstances that present us and they have to be consistent with the Charter and we're very motivated to giving all parliamentarians an opportunity to debate very publicly in the open chamber those measures so that we can be informed as to the necessity of the Emergencies Act so we can bring about the end, the peaceful conclusion of the illegal blockades.

Moderator: Thank you. I'll make one last call around to see if anyone has, wants to raise their hand for a question, and in the meantime, I'll, I'll throw one in. I wanted to know about the, the economic risk

behind the emergency. We've seen border blockades. How might the government respond if we see another border being, border crossing being blocked after the Emergency Order lifts? Would, would economic damage to Canada be enough to, to bring an emergency measure to sort take other strong action?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: It's an important question. I'll say a few words and then I'll pass to Minister Lametti and other colleagues. But, but certainly the economic impact that was caused by the blockades at the Ambassador Bridge to the tune of nearly \$400 million a day that idled jobs, that saw plants shut down, that created a devastating negative impact on the manufacturing sector, but not only in Southwestern Ontario, across various supply chains cannot be overstated. And, and certainly, given the tactics that have been used by the illegal blockades to interrupt those supply chains at our borders, at other critical infrastructure, including at national symbols like Parliament, like provincial legislatures, like some of our war monuments, remains a going concern.

And so there, there is absolutely an economic aspect to this that does present a very serious threat to our economic security, to our trade relations with the United States and other partners, which are critically important to our sovereignty and that is indeed one of the things that I think Minister Lametti's rationale and explanation paper in support of the invocation of the Emergencies Act spells out. And I will turn it to him to elaborate further.

Hon. David Lametti: Thanks Marco. What I would underline is that the invocation of this, this emergency, so the use of the Emergencies Act in this circumstance, it was the ensemble of, of the various challenges at a number of different border crossings, as well as the situation in Ottawa, as well as ongoing, as well as ongoing surveillance, if you will, of other border crossings as this went, as this went along. And so it was all of that together, with the economic impact that it was causing. Should we, should we take away the Emergencies Act and a situation were to arise again, we would, we would have to evaluate that. So it's a hypothetical question to which none of us will ever give you an answer. It's something that we have to, we have to think about in each circumstance. Minister Blair, I wonder if you have anything to add?

Hon. Bill Blair: Only, only, David – thank you David – and, and only that, the, you know, the targeted, uncoordinated attacks we saw on critical trade corridors, at the Ambassador Bridge, in Alberta and Emerson, Manitoba, at the Pacific Highway in British Columbia, you know, clearly demonstrated a, a very sincere intent on the part of the people engaged in those illegal blockades to harm the country. We saw the impact in, in Southwestern Ontario and in the auto sector and literally thousands of workers who were idled by the actions of these individuals. You know, the cost and the potential future cost to Canada by these illegal actions is very, very significant.

And when we see targeted attacks on critical infrastructure such as transportation and manufacturing in this country, I think we have a responsibility to defend the country, to defend Canadian interests and to defend our economy and we have found it necessary obviously to use extraordinary measures and tools in these circumstances in order to do our job, of doing what is required to protect the country and we'll always stand on guard for, for Canada's interest and, and support the important work that law enforcement does and others in keeping Canada safe.

Hon. Mary Ng: Can I just make a comment here around international trade? It is extremely important that, that our trading partners continue to have the confidence in, in our relationship and particularly in this trading relationship. I won't repeat what colleagues have already said, but in Canada, one out of six jobs in our country is related to trade. So it's very, very important to the economic security and that of the jobs and people in our communities across the country.

Moderator: Thank you. I see no more questions on the line, so unless you'd like to give any final comments, it appears to be all we have for today. So thank you, merci, miigwetch.

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